

REMARKS

This Amendment is being filed in response to the Final Office Action mailed January 21, 2009, which has been reviewed and carefully considered. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the remarks to follow are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-19 remain in this application, where claims 10-19 had been added previously added.

In the Final Office Action, claims 1-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 7,136,817 (Schroder) in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,050,971 (Kaufholz) and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0181723 (Kataoka). It is respectfully submitted that claims 1-19 are patentable over Schroder, Kaufholz and Kataoka for at least the following reasons.

As correctly noted on page 4 of the Final Office Action, Schroder and Kaufholz do not disclose or suggest that the second position includes "an orientation and a distance relative to the microphone array, and the speech control unit being configured to discriminate between sounds originating from users who are located

in front of each other," as recited in independent claim 1, and similarly recited in independent claim 9. Paragraphs [0006] and [0047] of Kataoka are cited in an attempt to remedy the deficiencies in Schroder and Kaufholz.

Kataoka is directed to a robot where the attention direction of a robot can be aligned with a directivity direction of a microphone array. Paragraph [0006] of Kataoka merely describes that the robot recognize voices from an arbitrary direction, where the direction of a sound source is estimated by a microphone array. Further, paragraph [0047] merely describes that the attention direction of the robot is aligned with an incident direction of the voice, and that voices from the attention direction (the directivity direction of the microphone array) are emphasized.

It is respectfully submitted that Schroder, Kaufholz, Kataoka, and combination thereof, do not teach or suggest the present invention as recited in independent claim 1, and similarly recited in independent claim 9 which, amongst other patentable elements, recites (illustrative emphasis provided):

wherein the recognition of the predetermined keyword at the second position calibrates the beam

forming module to follow the user from the first position to the second position so that the subsequent utterance originating from the second position are accepted while utterances of other users at other positions are discarded, the second position including an orientation and a distance relative to the microphone array, and the speech control unit being configured to discriminate between sounds originating from users who are located in front of each other.

Discriminate between sounds originating from users who are located in front of each other is nowhere disclosed or suggested in Schroder, Kaufholz and Kataoka, alone or in combination. Kataoka is merely concerned with direction, and NOT distance, and does not disclose or suggest discriminate between sounds originating from users who are located in front of each other, as recited in independent claims 1 and 9.

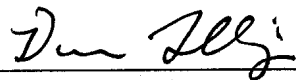
Based on the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1 and 9 are allowable over Schroder and Kaufholz, and notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Claims 2-8 and 10-19 respectively depend from one of claims 1 and 9 and accordingly are allowable for at least this reason as well as for the separately patentable elements contained in each of said claims. Accordingly, separate consideration of each of the

dependent claims is respectfully requested.

In addition, Applicant denies any statement, position or averment of the Examiner that is not specifically addressed by the foregoing argument and response. Any rejections and/or points of argument not addressed would appear to be moot in view of the presented remarks. However, the Applicant reserves the right to submit further arguments in support of the above stated position, should that become necessary. No arguments are waived and none of the Examiner's statements are conceded. And in particular, no Official Notices are conceded.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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